

THE DANGER OF RICHES :

SEEK GOD FIRST, AND YE SHALL HAVE ALL.

TWO SERMONS,

PREACHED

IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST. JAMES, BRISTOL.

BY THE REV.

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IN consequence of a statement, made in different forms, that these "two sermons were preached in opposition to the explicit and reiterated desire of the Bishop," "the expressed orders of the Diocesan," it becomes necessary for me to say, (what I should have hoped would have been believed,) that I never have preached, and never would preach, in any Diocese, against the known or expressed wish of the Diocesan.

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SERMON I.

THE DANGER OF RICHES.

S. LUKE, xviii. 24—27.

“Jesus said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle’s eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. And they that heard it said, Who then can be saved? And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.”

How is it, my brethren, that we can hear these words, and some of us not have a pang about them? Is it that the love of wealth is so insatiable, that none can think that *they* are rich, because others are richer? or since, when riches increase, they are increased that eat them, and as the supply increases, the self-made wants increase too, so that the rich feel often as though they were poor? Yet some of us, at times, must have had misgivings about them; some few, perhaps, have really set ourselves to act upon them; most, it is to be feared, have taken up

with some easy meaning, by which, while they allowed themselves to have, use, increase, lay up their wealth, they persuaded themselves that the words did not belong to them. They will say, that the words belonged to the first preaching of the Gospel, when Christians were persecuted, and they who would follow Christ must give up all and hate their own lives also; that now, by God's mercy, we live in quiet times, in which Christ may be served with no great sacrifices, that we are not called upon to do the like, but only to be ready, if we were. Or they will say, that in St. Mark's Gospel our Lord explains His words, when He adds, "How hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!" and that so the words relate not to those who *have* riches, but to those who *trust* in them. Any how, then, the rich are in no danger now, nay, rather to be envied; the woe on riches and the blessing on poverty have passed away; now without fear we may have our good things in this life; there is no peril lest having our treasure here, our hearts should be here also, or being fixed on earth, we should lose heaven. And yet as the words were used, they sounded anew as real words; they were said over one who was very nigh to the kingdom of heaven, who was free from the sins by which so many of us fall, in whom there was so much to love, since of him it is said, as of so few, "Jesus beholding him, loved him;" we felt that they were heavy words; felt that they belonged not to the poor, felt (as we

so often may of words sadly explained away) that they might have a meaning for us.

True, indeed, it is, that the early Christians had to maintain their faith amid outward trials the most intense, which flesh and blood could not have endured, had not He, in Whose Name they suffered, Himself sustained them, and endured in them what they for Him endured. He Who sent them forth in the unequal conflict against Satanic rage clothed them with Divine might. They could not be conquered in whom, suffering for Christ, Christ suffered. How then again might this their very suffering scare our ease! Is then the warfare over? Is Satan's malice chained? his nature changed? his implacable hate against God and His saints abated? his restless deadly hatred against those who are to occupy the seat in glory whence he fell, extinguished? Or, since this cannot be so, is his mode of warfare only changed? and would he now, by a more dreadful cunning, feign himself at rest, wrest nothing from us, use fraud instead of violence, leave or give to men all things fair, freely to enjoy; be our friend instead of our enemy, teach us that we have nothing to fear from him, mingling his poison secretly, that we, without fear, may taste and die? My brethren, if we are wise, rather may we, in the awfulness of that deadly struggle, know the present warfare which Satan wages for each human soul. Then, too, they who disciplined not themselves, whose life was not one continual preparation for the last conflict, fell.

Yet how fell they? How often, after long-enduring tortures, “subdued¹ by their vehemence, and by protracted rackings, they, at last, having withstood much, perished, denying Him, their only hope! Could any thing intensely realize the awfulness of our being, what more than that some who had suffered even extremity of tortures for Christ, should at last have denied Him, and be denied by Him? Could any thing awaken men from their death-sleep of security and ease, it were such glimpses into that fearful unseen world as this. Can this be a place to rest securely and walk at random, where chasms, such as these, open into the pit of hell?

We cannot thus tamper with our consciences, when the living words of our Judge stand out before us, not heard only with the outward ear, but borne in upon our souls as His words Who is the Truth. “JESUS said.” Who said? The Eternal Word, the Unchangeable God, Whose word abideth for ever, and shall not pass away when heaven and earth shall pass, but shall abide to judge us at the last day. He said sorrowfully over the young man who went away sorrowfully from Him, his Life, “How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!” and more than this, that what was impossible and against nature was easier than this; and, finally, when His disciples, who had no share in this world, for they had left all and followed Him, stood in awe and

¹ S. Cyprian, Ep. 56, see Ep. 11. Oxf. Tr.

amazed, He yet had no other consolation, than that it was indeed impossible with man, but with God all things, even things impossible, were possible. And can we then again persuade ourselves, that what He spake and fenced in so solemnly, related to one time only, that it has no meaning now, and when that generation passed away, so did His words? or, because one Gospel records that He added, "they who trust in riches," that this first thrice-recorded warning, "How hardly shall they that *have* riches enter into the kingdom of God!" had no meaning of its own, and that, by both He meant only certain gross cases, in which men made money their idol, and not rather that all the rich were in danger of trusting in riches? When our Lord has so solemnly laid down a truth, and adds thereto another truth, shall we treat this as wave passes over wave, and not rather seek in it some further meaning of His words, enlarging them, not effacing them? Our Lord, the Eternal Word and Wisdom, useth not thus His words in vain. It must be true, that they who are rich shall at all times hardly enter into the kingdom of God, and this, because all rich are in great peril of trusting in riches. To trust in riches is the peril inseparable from having them, the shadow they ever cast, the disease which besets them; their very natural fruit; so that so far from taking for granted, as men do, that if they are not conscious of having it, they have it not, they may more safely think, that if they are not conscious of having uprooted it, they have it.

Rather, if one asked, What peril have riches? one might ask, What peril have they not? First, then, they are wholly contrary to the Life of Christ and His Passion. That cannot be the safe, the happy lot, which is in all things most opposite to His. He came not only to die and suffer for us, but to be Himself the Way unto Himself. He is Himself the Royal Way, the straight Way for our feet, wherein is no stumbling; the way ² by His example, as the Truth in His promises, the Life in His rewards; the Way whereby we should follow on, the Truth to Whom we are to attain, the Life in Whom to abide. The nearer, then, in all things, to His Life, the surer must we be not to perish from the Way; the nearer unto His outward Life, the nearer, if this be our choice, or if not being ours, we, by conforming ourselves to the will of God, make it ours, may we hope to be to Himself; some shadow, we may hope, of His Cross may reach unto us; some ray of His inward Life, from Himself who is our Life, may fall upon us; and while we would mould ourselves in His outward form and condition, He will, we may hope, impress upon our souls some measure of His likeness; while we would choose His portion, we shall find Himself our Portion; while we would stand upon His way, we should find Him join Himself, even if at first as One Unknown, as the companion of ours, to “abide with” us; while we thus outwardly draw nigh to Him, He has said, “I will draw nigh unto you.”

² S. Bern. in Asc. Dom. Sermon. 2, fin.

What then was His portion? "He, being rich, for our sakes became poor." He emptied Himself, in that He was by Nature Equal with God. He emptied Himself of His Majesty and Co-eternal Glory, and took our shame; the Lord was found in fashion as a servant, the Creator was obedient to His creature; the Holy took the likeness of our flesh of sin; the Lord of Life died the sinner's death. "This shall be a sign unto you," it was said to the shepherds; "ye shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes and lying in the manger." By two tokens was the Divine Infant made known. To the wise men, His Divine Nature by the sign from heaven. He, the Bright and Morning Star, was to them declared by His own light. A new-created star pointed out its Creator, and they fell down and worshipped. To the shepherds, the token of the birth of "the Saviour, Christ the Lord," was His poverty and lowliness; His throne a manger; His Majesty, helpless infancy; His royal apparel, the mean swaddling-clothes. O blessed poverty, which should give us the true Riches! blessed helplessness, which is our Might! blessed manger, which contains for us, who were as "beasts that perish," the Bread of life! blessed swaddling-bands, which bound up our wounds and knit up our weakness! Blessed, Divine, All-holy Outcast, for Whom there was no room in the inn, that we, outcast and homeless, might be restored to our Father's house, its many, spacious, glorious, starry mansions! blessed Divine Humanity, which should make us sinners "par-

takers of the Divine Nature !” O blessed Lord, Who out of Thy boundless love didst narrow Thyself in the substance of our flesh to be cradled in a manger, wert born in our littleness, sorrows, cold, poverty, nakedness ; didst live with no place to lay Thy Sacred Head, until Thou didst rest it bared of all upon Thy Cross, Thy Sacred Body to rest in a stranger’s grave ! Yet what speaketh He to us, my brethren ? “How long, ye sons of men, will ye love vanity ? Shall I, Who alone have, and am the true Riches, choose poverty, and will ye, who bear My Name, heap up riches ? I be houseless, and ye ‘build you wide houses and large chambers ?’ I be rejected, and ye seek to be honoured for My gifts ? I choose hardness, and ye ease ? I dishonour, and ye glory, ‘delicate members of a Thorn-crowned Head,’ looking to be co-heirs with Me in Heaven, and cleaving to earth as your inheritance, and place of abiding ? ‘Sons of men,’ will ye not learn of Me, Who being the Son of God, for your sakes, became the Son of man ?”

Unlike Him, we must ever here be ; for we are sinners, He Alone, as Man, was Holy ; we His creatures, He our God. But can it be safe not to be aiming, herein also to be less unlike, to choose that which in all its pomp and glory was brought before His eye as Man, to be wholly rejected by Him ; to choose what He rejected, and shrink back from what He chose ?

This, then, is the first all-containing peril of riches.

They are, in themselves, contrary to the Cross of Christ. I speak not now of what they may be *made*. As we, being enemies, were, through the Cross, made friends, so may all things, evil and perilous in themselves, except sin, become our friends. The Cross of Christ changes all it touches. Death is life; sorrow, joy; suffering, pleasure; nay, what is most deeply perilous *may*, by the grace of God, be the very instrument of salvation and the channel of grace. Temptations may become the occasions of victory; Satan's harassings give us trust in God; wretched thoughts, the penalty of sin, gain us deep hatred of sin; weakness purchase for us true strength; past falls goad us, through deep penitence and humility, to nobler aims and higher crowns; the mammon of unrighteousness gain us God, the true Riches. Poisons, in the physician's hand, remedy sickness. In our Great Physician's Hand, all things work to good to them who love God. Be we indeed borne on the wood of the Cross, wind and wave, in His Hand, shall but waft us onward more swiftly to the heavenly shore. The serpent bears in it the remedy to its own death-bite. But woe to him who struggleth with the storms of temptation, and Christ walketh not on the waters! Woe to him who "putteth his hand on the hole of the asp," unless he be a "child weaned" from the pleasures of sense and of the world, or "taketh up the serpents" of evil suggestions, unless Christ have given him the power to shake them off into the fire of their own hell, or "drink deadly things,"

unless Christ be life within him that he be not hurt!

Our Lord, in that He says the rich "shall hardly enter," implies that they *may* "enter the kingdom of God." The Cross of Christ can make riches safe. They are perilous, not death; and their peril is, lest they lead men to refuse His Cross. Few take it up for themselves. All wish to come to Christ, for "in His Right Hand are pleasures for evermore," few to follow after Him; all would desire to attain to His Resurrection, few wish to have the fellowship of His sufferings; all would reign with Him, few would suffer with Him. Such of us, as are bearing His Cross, mostly took it not up simply at His bidding, but in His mercy He laid it upon us, in suffering, or sickness, or bereavement, or heavy loss, or aching of the heart, or a burdened conscience; and He Who gave it us gave us strength to bear on under it, yea, made it bear us, lightening our steps; gave it us as a staff to steady our feeble knees, in slippery places to stay us, in the deep waters to uphold us, sustain us in life's pilgrimage, and comfort us in the valley of the shadow of death. By bearing it patiently, we learn to bear it readily; by bearing it readily we learn to love it; for we find it a tree of life to those who lay hold of it, and its fruit, if at first bitter to the taste, is sweet and joyous afterwards. But this is the great peril of the rich, that they can so fence themselves against the Cross, which almost all, until they know it, dread. The Cross finds us in desola-

tion, and they, He says, "have received their consolation;" it finds us in evil things, and they are surrounded by their good things; it comes in want, and they have abundance; in distress, and they are at ease; in sorrow, and they are ever tempted even to deaden their sorrows in this world's miserable joys. Happy only in this, that He Who chasteneth whom He loveth, sprinkles His own healthful bitterness over life's destructive sweetness, and by the very void and emptiness of vanity calls forth the unsatisfied soul no more to "spend money on that which is not bread, nor its labour on that which satisfieth not."

But if it be so hard for the rich to seek to bear the Cross, it must be hard for them truly to love Him Who bore it. Love longeth to liken itself to that it loves. It takes up its words; it hangs on its looks; it uses its actions; it catches its thoughts; it longs to become another itself; it suffers with its sufferings; it often sees them sooner, feels them more, than the sufferer himself. It is an awful question, my brethren, but how can we love our Lord, if we suffer not with Him? How can we really, with the eye of Faith, behold Him toiling, suffering, bruised, rejected of men, the Man of sorrows, dying for our salvation? How can we have His crucified Form really before our eyes, and ourselves like ever to be at ease? to have only joys, when His cup was all sorrow? to be honoured by the world by whom He was despised? to have sweetness, when He tasted

the gall? to have but rest, when He had only toil? to live but for enjoyment, when He lived only to suffer? How could we now bear to feel that He is still despised, still rejected, that the fruits of His Passion are lost, the price of His Blood wasted, and we be at ease, be moved by no holy fervour, be not borne out of ourselves, look on carelessly at the waste of souls for whom He shed His Blood, unless we were also wasting the Price of that Blood in ourselves? Ye know well how in human love sympathy increases love; how proverbial truth says, that pity is akin to love; how we then seem first to know what love is, when we suffer with and for whom we love. Earthly feelings are the type of heavenly; they are the prelude, the practice, of everlasting love. Try then in Divine love what ye have found true in human. Deprive yourselves of some pleasures, forego some ease, give up what shall cost thee something, out of love for Him Who gave His whole Self for thee, Who will give His whole Self to thee, and say to Himself, "Lord, Who hast so loved me, this would I do out of love to Thee," and He, the Fount of love, shall distil some drop of His everlasting love into thy soul, and thou shalt know how self-denial deepens love, how sweeter far one whisper of His love in thy inmost soul, known to thee alone, one thrilling touch of His good pleasure, than the whole world without His Presence. But then will ye have some taste how riches, and all their train of vanity, show, luxury, pleasures of sense, the lust of the eye,

and the pride of life, are a thick, damp, heavy mist, hindering the Sun of Righteousness from kindling the soul's love, and drawing it up to Him. Suffer but ever so little for the love of Christ, and thou wilt find, that to suffer is to win, to put from thee all suffering is to lose, Christ. As ye taste the sweetness of Christ, He will heal the palate of your souls, that ye shall nauseate all which is not He; that heavenly Food shall make this world's feverish pleasures and vanities sickly to your soul. Taste what His Love is, and ye shall love nought but His love, for His love's sake.

If we love Christ, we must long for His Presence. It is not to long for Him, nor to love Him, to cling to this world and its pleasures while we may; to part with them only when they part with us; to desire then only to come into His Presence, when we can no longer keep away; to wish to be saved by Him only that we be not condemned by Him. We may indeed well fear His Coming, while we fear that the sins of our youth or age are not washed out in His precious Blood; we may long for time to bring forth better fruit to present Him when He comes; but we have no true, at least, no burning love for Christ, if we wish to stay here for any other end than to do His will, or do good to those whom He loves, and has given us to love. It is then another exceeding peril of riches and ease, that they may tend to make us forget that here is not our home. Men on a journey through a stranger's, much more an enemy's land,

linger not. Their hearts are in their home, thither are their eyes set; they love the winds which have blown over it; they love the very hills which look upon it, even while they hide it; days, hours, and minutes pass quickly or slowly as they seem to bring them near to it; distance, time, weariness, strength, all are counted only with a view to this, "are they nearer to the faces they love, can they, when shall they reach it?" What then, my brethren, if our eyes are not set upon the everlasting "hills, whence cometh our help?" if we cherish not those inward breathings which come to us from our Heavenly Home, hushing, refreshing, restoring, lifting up our hearts, and bidding us flee away and be at rest? What if we are wholly satisfied, and intent on things present? can we be longing for the Face of God? or can we love Him Whom we long not for? or do we long for Him, if we say not daily, "When shall I come and appear before the presence of God?" In a place which we are soon to part from, we buy not houses or fields, are not anxious how we are lodged, take things, so to speak, as we find them, use them as not our own, set no value upon them; we are among them but as among things strange and foreign to us; we wish nothing otherwise, because it is for a short time. And yet, brethren, if we for one moment stedfastly gaze upon Eternity, one unceasing, unchanging, ineffable brightness of bliss, or darkness of sorrow, how does, not the mere span of the longest life, but the utmost length of time which

thought can reach, shrink up into a nothing, a thing which is and is not, for it has ceased to be? It is then, a contradiction to say that we are strangers and pilgrims, and to use this earth as a home; to say that we are looking for another country, and to take up with this; to heap around us things of sense and time, to dwell with pleasure upon them, and to say that we are looking for the things eternal. What says Scripture? "The time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not." What did they, the early Christians, whose hearts were really in heaven with their Lord? They left all, and followed Him. They, as many "as were possessors of lands or houses, sold them, and brought the prices, and laid them at the Apostles' feet." "They sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, as every man had need." Safe and blessed was it for those who could and can do so; and perilous are riches, because they so withdraw us from the Apostolic life, fix us so much upon things present, make this life seem something substantial and real, spread around us so many things to rivet us to this earth, make us content to be here, make this world our end, because we are so much at ease in it, dull our longings for God, because our hunger is stifled, not satisfied by this clay, empty men's souls of God, because filled with His creatures.

And, therefore, when God would try His friends with riches, He sent them, first or last, sharp trials, to make them feel that Himself, not His gifts, were their "exceeding great reward." Abraham was very rich in cattle and silver and gold, but these were not the gifts of God until he had first left his father's house and all he had, in poverty, and a stranger, not knowing whither he went, having chosen God for his All. Isaac was persecuted by the Philistines. Jacob was a wanderer, and his days were evil. Joseph was sold as a slave, and his feet hurt in the stocks, ere he became Lord of Egypt. David was an outcast, hunted up and down for his life upon the mountains. Job was an example of suffering affliction, and patience. In one word, we may say that God has either tried His friends exceedingly before or amid riches, or, as Moses and Elisha and St. Matthew, called upon them to abandon them. To Solomon, perhaps, alone, gave He them without outward sorrow, until almost the close of life, having first given him the heart to choose the true wisdom rather than riches, and at the last bringing him back by inward emptiness and manifold vexations from without, to his first choice, that to "fear God, and keep His commandments, is the whole duty of man."

Truly there is not one part of the Christian character which riches, in themselves, do not tend to impair. Our Lord placed at the head of Evangelic blessings, poverty of spirit, and, as a help to it, and image of it, the outward body of the soul of true

poverty, poverty of substance too. The only "riches" spoken of in the New Testament, except as a woe, are the unsearchable riches of the glory and grace of Christ, the riches of the goodness of God, the depth of the riches of His wisdom, or the riches of liberality, whereto deep poverty abounded³. Earthly riches, it names, only to warn against their deceitfulness, uncertainty, unrighteousness, to teach us how to make friends of a deadly enemy. At the head of His blessings He sets, "Blessed be ye poor;" at the head of His woes, "Woe unto you that are rich:" surely thereby, at least, warning us, that the outward poverty which He chose is the best nurse of poverty of spirit; that as "the love of riches" is the root of all evil, so riches are a woe, lest men love them. What grace, well-nigh, do they not tend to injure? They twine themselves so around us, tender at first and slight, and then hold us so by the iron grasp of habit, that we scarce feel their power in stinting our spiritual growth until we try to burst them. Humility is the foundation of all grace; pride, the summit of all sin. Yet every thing around the rich, every daily, hourly circumstance of life, from very childhood, makes humility difficult. To be waited upon by fellow-Christians, not of charity only, but as a superior, to give commands, rarely to have to obey, to be accustomed to be obeyed, to have human respect for things outward, to be spoken

³ Eph. i. 7. 18. ii. 7. iii. 8. 16. Rom. xi. 13. 2 Cor. viii. 2.

to with deference, to have what others wish for, to depend visibly upon no one, to meet few contradictions or rough words,—we can scarcely feel, until we desire earnestly to be humble, what an atmosphere of pride and self-satisfaction these things spread around us. Thou must well study thine own nothingness, wouldest thou learn to be really last, when in station among the first. Again, our Lord says, “Woe unto you that are rich, for ye have received your consolation. Woe unto you that are filled;” and “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness.” Yet the very fulness of outward things makes it harder to hunger after things inward. “Beware,” says God Himself, “lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses and dwelt therein, and when thy herds and flocks multiply, and thy silver and gold are multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied,”—of what would He have us then beware, my brethren, for all these things are what *we* are surrounded with, have pleasure in, covet? “Beware,” He says, “lest then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God.” “It is difficult, nay impossible,” says a father⁴, “to enjoy both the things present and things to come; to fill here the belly and there the soul; to pass from delights unto delights; to be first in both worlds, and shine glorious both in heaven and earth. Would we above wear the crown of gold, here we

⁴ S. Jer. Ep. 34, ad Julian.

must wear the crown of thorns. ‘Remember, son, thou in thy lifetime hadst thy good things.’” “We were not,” says a holy man, “cast out of Paradise to make another paradise for ourselves. This was the sole ground of those torments, that he had ‘*received*’ his good things: Scripture saith not, ‘took by violence, gained unjustly, coveted;’ but ‘*received*:’ he received them from his forefathers, used them as his own, and, filled here, hungered for ever. How can he hunger and thirst for Christ, who is filled with the husks of swine? As fire and water cannot co-exist, so neither can spiritual and carnal delights in the same man. Where the senses are feasted with curious variety of food, there the heavenly bread forsakes the famished soul.”

Poverty is, at least, a fostering nurse of humility, meekness, patience, trust in God, simplicity, sympathy with the Sufferings of our Lord, or of its fellow (for it knows the heart of those who suffer). What when riches, in themselves, hinder the very grace of mercifulness which seems their especial grace, of which they are the very means? What wonder that they cherish that brood of snakes, pride, arrogance, self-pleasing, self-indulgence, self-satisfaction, trust in self, forgetfulness of God, sensuality, luxury, spiritual sloth, when they deaden the heart to the very sorrows they should relieve? And yet, it is difficult, unless, through self-discipline, we feel some suffering, to sympathize with those who suffer. Fulness of

bread deadens love. As a rule, the poor show more mercy to the poor out of their poverty, than the rich out of their abundance.

But if it be a peril to *have* riches, much more is it to *seek* them. To have them is a trial allotted to any of us by God; to seek them, is our own. Through trials which He has given us, He will guide us; but where has He promised to help us in what we bring upon ourselves? Whence also Holy Scripture speaks of this special peril. "They that will⁵ to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare, and many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." It says, "fall into them," as if this were no longer a peril only, but the very destruction itself, and to "will to be rich" were itself the very pitfall of Satan. For what men have themselves made, they love the more. They are a sort of offspring, which they cherish with a parent's love; the end for which they have toiled, for which they serve; yea, they are the very idols which they first make with their hands, and then fall down before them and worship as gods. "Covetousness," says Scripture, "is idolatry." And yet this is the very end and aim in this our country, the very nerve of what men do, the very ground of their undertakings, to keep or to enlarge their wealth. A spirit of enterprise infects all; it is the very air men live in; pros-

⁵ βουλόμενοι πλουτεῖν. 1 Tim. vi. 9.

perity is our idol, the very measure of good or ill, the very end to which they refer all other ends: and what is this but their god?

In all this, I have not spoken of any grosser sins to which the love of money gives birth; of what all fair men would condemn, yet which, in some shape or other, so many practise. Such are, hardness to the poor, or to dependants; using a brother's service for almost nought, in order to have more to spend in luxury; petty or more grievous frauds; falsehood, hard dealing, taking advantage one of another, speaking evil of one another, envying one another, forgetting natural affection. And yet in this Christian land many of these are very common. Holy Scripture warns us all not to think ourselves out of danger of them. The wealthy Ahab, whose palace was of ivory, slew Naboth for a garden of herbs; Judas, an Apostle, for thirty pieces of silver, sold his Lord and God.

It is then, in tender compassion to us, that Almighty God opens to us now, more than heretofore, ways of showing love to Him, of making friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, of freeing ourselves from a burden, that so we may mount the more easily to our heavenly home, our riches may wing our prayers, our alms ascend and plead for us before the throne of God, and we ourselves be more likened unto Him, Who for our sakes became poor, if for our brethren's sake we too become poorer, that so we may find in Him the true riches.

My brethren, with unwillingness and shame would I, in this house of God, say a word of myself. Yet, for fear it should be misunderstood in these days of doubt and misgiving and disquiet, I came here among you ⁶, with the one simple end of asking you who are able (as I had promised some months past) to help in supplying the heavy yearly expenses for the daily worship of God in this Parish Church. Ye all are interested in it, even those who cannot come here; nay, who knows not whether those most who cannot come here? They who come, come for their own sakes, but they come for yours also. Love binds together the present and the absent. They who come, come not to pray for their own souls only, but, as the Apostle bids, for all. Mutual intercession is placed by the Apostle among the primary duties of Christians. "I exhort, therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." It is on this pattern that the intercessions of our daily public prayers are framed. In His hands the prayers of those whom

⁶ This was inserted, at the suggestion of a respected friend, in consequence of some idle tales, as though my going to Bristol, instead of being the simple fulfilment of a promise to a friend, had been to preach in connexion with Nov. 5.

He teaches to pray, issue in the salvation of the souls of their brethren. He wills that so great a gift as man's salvation should not be bestowed without prayer to Him. His own Almighty power and grace is so most shown, when we seem to do nothing but ask Him Who is Almighty. Daily prayer for all these things is especially acceptable to Him, Who willeth that men should always pray, and not faint. It is befitting our humility and His Majesty that we should not weary of asking the same things. It "is good and acceptable in the sight of" Him Who makes it acceptable, our God and Saviour.

While, then, ye help the poor to gather, at least in the evening, in this house of prayer, ye gain help from God through your love for them; ye gain intercessors for yourselves. And mighty is the power of prayer for yourselves, your families, your sick, your weak, your erring, all you love: if they stand, that they may be strengthened; if weak-hearted, that they may be comforted and holpen; if they fall, that they may be raised up, and Satan beat down under all our feet. Mighty is the power of prayer, because it seems so weak; for in man's weakness is God's strength. Mighty is it; for it is the gift of God the Holy Ghost, and ascends to God the Father, in the words, through the Merits, by the Intercession of Him Who is God and Man, our Redeeming Lord and God.

The time is hastening on, when we must part with all. Naked were we born, naked must we return.

Then whose shall these things be which thou hast prepared? Thine shall they be, if thou send them before thee by the hands of the poor. And with what usury! Become poorer in the world, and thou shalt be rich in God; be rich in mercy, and thou shalt be rich in God; part with treasures of money for Christ's sake, and thou shalt have treasures of grace; give to the poor, and thou shalt have God, He hath said, for thy Debtor⁷: "Sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven." And what treasure? Himself, to Whom we have done it. He Who is Mercy and Truth calleth thee to be merciful, that, being merciful *in* thee now, He may, at the awful day, be merciful *unto* thee; He, by His love which He giveth Thee, shall enlarge thy heart, that it may contain Himself, and He Himself pour into it that good Treasure, full and overflowing, into thy bosom, even that torrent of pleasure and of love, which ever floweth and never faileth; for it is God Himself, the Fountain of all goodness, the Good, in whom are all goods, Who shall be thy Portion and Possession for ever. What will it avail thee, naked of good deeds, and unclothed with the robe of Christ, what thou hadst here, if it be then said unto thee, "Thy money perish with thee?" What will it be to see the Face of thy Judge shining with love upon thee, because in those whom He loveth, thou hast loved Him, hast done

⁷ Prov. xix. 17.

good, He saith, to Him, and bidding thee enter into the joy of thy Lord, even that ineffable peace of bliss, wherewith the Ever-blessed Son joyeth in the love of the Eternal Father, and the Father loveth the Son, and in Him all who love Him? As ye would choose *then*, if ye could, choose now while ye *may*, the world and its passing vanities, or Christ and His everlasting joy.

SERMON II.

SEEK GOD FIRST, AND YE SHALL HAVE ALL.

S. Matt. vi. 33.

“Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness ; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

HAPPINESS, my brethren, ye all seek after : may ye obtain it. Our Lord from heaven preaches unto you how ye may obtain it. “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His Righteousness ; and all these things shall be added unto you.” All seek happiness ; but, since the fall, all, until they are restored by faith in God, seek it in a wrong way. The very character of the fall was to seek out of God what was only to be found from God, in God. First, Satan taught to doubt that God had indeed forbidden what *he* would teach to covet. “Hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden ?” Then he taught, that God would not be so strict as He said ; that He frightened them only, as people often do children, yet would not do what He said : “Ye shall not

surely die," *i.e.* "Ye shall not altogether die." Then, bolder yet, he taught Eve that she might have this one good, this chief good, in her own way, from herself, not from God. From God she had all she had. He had placed her in a garden of delight; she heard from time to time His Voice; she was clothed with the robe of original righteousness: and all she had, so that she need not lose them, so long as she held them of God. She had power not to sin, and without sin there was no suffering. She was immortal, for "death came by sin." She still waited for the perfecting of her nature. The bliss of the blessed was alone before her, "to know," as St. Paul saith, "even as we are known," to rest in God from her easy labours, (which yet were no toil, for in Paradise there was no sweat of the brow,) and which were sweet, for they were for God. They had but to dress and keep the garden for God. Perfect were they, as wayfarers, waiting for the perfection of their home. Knowledge, Adam had, without curiosity; for God brought the animals to him; he sought not them; and what he, taught of God, called them, God appointed should be their names. Knowledge, too, had he of God, for God made Himself known to him; and counselled with him, as it were, of the names of His creation, and gave him power over himself and them, and an upright gaze to heaven, and "holy freedom from shame, acting without suffering, meditation without toil." His daily toilless labour for God was closed by evening communing with God, in the cool

of the day, a foretaste of his everlasting rest in the knowledge and contemplation of God, when, face to face, the blessed and "pure in heart shall behold" Him, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and, beholding, "shall be like Him, for they shall see Him as HE is." Of this he had, evening by evening, the foretaste. For it seems that, after the fall, it was at the wonted time that he heard the Voice of God, and hid himself, ashamed. Having become unholy, he dared not behold the Holy God. Fulness of knowledge alone he lacked, and so Satan had the plea, "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil," and tempted Eve to forestall what God had in store for us. "We shall be like Him," says the beloved disciple, as the fruits of the redemption; "Ye shall be as gods," says Satan. "Then shall I know, even as I also am known," says he whose life was Christ, the aim of whose life of suffering was, "That I may know Him, and the power of His Resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings." "Knowing good and evil," says Satan. This was our first parents' one temptation; to seek out of God, *now*, in the present, in their own way, forbidden by God, what God had in store for them in His. What they desired was good, the very good of God, the very good which He purposed for them, but from His own Hand, to "be like Him." The end was good, the means were evil. It was a falling away from God, seeking from His creatures, through themselves, what God would give in Himself, by Himself. The

root of the sin was one ; yet it, at once, branched out into the whole range of human sin. With that half consent with which Eve looked upon the forbidden fruit, she began to lose all the beauty of her as yet unsinning nature, and the germs of the whole death-crop of man's evil desires shot up in her. She was falling from the Creator ; she became subject to the creature. Man, formed in the Image of the Ever-blessed Trinity, became subject to a threefold corruption of which the Apostle speaks. "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," were all at once gathered into that first fall. The flesh, too, rebelled against man, when the soul ceased to be subject to its God. "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food," (this is the lust of the flesh,) "and that it was pleasant to the eyes," (this was the lust of the eye,) and "a tree to be desired to make one wise," (here is the "pride of life,") she took of the fruit and "did eat," and, as the first fruit of her sin, she spread her sin to whom alone she could,— "And gave also to her husband with her, and he did eat ; and the eyes of them both were opened," to see their own shame, and the nature of their deed, and to desire to hide it, yet be unable, and to know what pleasure is, out of God, and to be its slave ; to know the shame of sin, and have no power to master it.

This then, is the one deep original disease of man, entailed by the fall ; the one evil source of all his manifold sins, which our Lord came down to heal.

The only bliss of the creature is to desire what God wills, as He wills it. The one sickness of the human race is to desire what *it* wills, and compass it as *it* wills it. One end God proposes to man, and man to himself,—to be happy. Our Lord began His ministry with a ninefold “Blessed are” ye. The one search of the wise of old was, wherein was happiness. What every sinner seeks is a sort of solace of his misery. The passionate vents his passion, because it is a relief to him; men steal, to relieve some need they have, or think they have, or because they think it will be a good to them; covetousness, ambition, pleasure, vanity, thirst for praise, love of dress, the highest intellectual thirst for fame, or the lowest pleasure of the flesh, or the poorest act of self-will, each has this one end, that the soul hopes to find some momentary contentment in it. This is the character of all unbelief, to seek its own happiness, not from God. The way of all faith is to seek God’s ways, and its own happiness in them. All unbelief seeks some present gain, to incur incomparable, boundless woe hereafter; all faith undergoes some present loss, for future incomparable, infinite bliss. But Satan, being “a liar from the beginning,” fails in his word; and sin has misery in this life as well as in that which is to come; God keepeth His, and by the foretaste of everlasting joy, oh, how much more than compensates all which is now resigned for His sake; and what, in those good things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard! Nay, even here, trials

are mostly for a short season ; God soon, if not in the very act, replaces by His consolations what is sacrificed for His sake ; He sprinkles immediately (if not in the very act, as soon as it is over,) a healthful bitterness on the short-lived pleasures of sin. Sin is pleasant in the mouth ; when swallowed, it is bitter ; self-denial for Christ's sake has mostly sweetness, as soon as any one has, with a whole heart, embraced it.

Little, indeed, were it, if for that unutterable bliss we had here to undergo any suffering. What were 10,000 deaths compared to endless life and joy in God ? What says he, who was "in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure" and above belief, "in deaths oft," "in weariness and painfulness ; in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness ?" What thought he ? What is the one voice of the glorious company of the Apostles, spoken by him ? "I will glory in the things which concern mine infirmities." For these were the livery of the Apostolate, the badges of his Master, the marks of the Lord Jesus, the power of His grace, His strength made perfect in weakness, His life sustaining in death. These he bound around him as a diadem ; these light afflictions were as wings to Heaven ; dishonour was honour ; to be held as deceivers by man was to be true to God ; to be unknown was to be well known to God ; (as He said, "I know thee by name,") to die daily was to live daily by the life of Christ ; outward sorrow was

inward joy, poverty was the riches of Christ, whereof he was a steward, and whereby he made many rich; to have nothing in the world was to possess all things. For it was to have God for his Portion, Who hath all things, and is all things, and instead of all things; Food, yea, the Bread of Life, and the Living Vine, and the Well of Water springing up to everlasting life, whereof he who drinketh shall never thirst, and the True Riches, and Glory, and Peace, and Honour, and Immortality, and Robe of Righteousness, and endless Love and Bliss.

So to Apostles Christ speaketh, "In Me ye shall have peace;" yea, the Apostle saith to all, "All things are yours, the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come;" "all," he repeats, "are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's;" that is, ye, being Christ's, are members of Him Who is by Nature the Son of God, Whose are all things in Heaven and in earth, and He saith to thee, "All that I have is thine;" all is thine; for all may serve thee and further thy salvation; all men, all creatures, all things, the very opposite, shall serve thee: Angels, for they are ministering spirits sent forth to minister to such as shall be heirs of salvation; and devils, for they shall but try thy faith as God permits them; life, to gain fresh degrees of love; and death, to enter into thy Master's joy; All things present are thine to use to My glory, and the good things to come are thine already by faith in hope.

So spake He to the early Christians, when suffering for Him ; so speaketh He now to us, chiefly in heavy trial ; for then, when we seem bereaved of all, do we learn how all loss is gain in His Hands, and He Himself is instead of all.

Yet, to weak faith He speaks more as they may be able to bear it. He upbraids it not, nor says, "Cannot I suffice thee?" "Am I not better to thee than ten sons?" "Am not I thy Father, Who have bought thee? Have I not made thee and established thee? What wouldest thou have out of ME, Who have all things? What wouldest thou rather than ME, Who am all Goodness, the Fountain of all Good, the Good of all good, Who am God, *i.e.* Good? Whom shouldest thou have in Heaven but Me? and what upon earth canst thou desire in comparison of Me?" He says rather, "I know your weakness ; I, Who made you, know whereof ye are made, that ye are but flesh and blood ; and for flesh it is hard not to crave the things of flesh. I will give you what ye crave ; only seek ME first, and receive from ME what is Mine. Be not anxious. Trust ME. I have clothed the lilies of the field more beautifully than ye can clothe yourselves. I make the whole world a barn for the fowls of the air, and give them out of My treasure-house their meat in due season. I *know* all your needs, for I am God. I *will* to give you all ye need ; for I am your Heavenly Father. I *can* give you, for I am Lord of heaven and earth, and all things are Mine. 'Your Heavenly Father

knoweth that ye have need of all these things.' But 'seek ye first the kingdom of God and His Righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.' " O blessed choice! O easy purchase and condescending goodness of our God. He does not bid you *not* seek what ye would have; He only bids us seek first—what? Himself:—"Seek ye first the kingdom of God." What is this, but to seek first to be under His Almighty All-loving rule; seek ye to be members of His kingdom, under His Fatherly care; do not rebel against so great a King, nor withdraw yourself from so loving a Father: "and His Righteousness;" what is this, again, but to be clothed anew with that Robe of Righteousness which in Adam ye lost; to have, not your righteousness, but His; Righteousness from Him, but by Him given to you, to be righteous through His Righteousness imparted by Him to you, holy through His Holiness, His Grace, His Fatherly Goodness, the Gifts of His Spirit? Why how our Blessed Lord lifts us from earth to Heaven! we were thinking how we might have food and raiment and things for the body; and He tells us how we may have holiness and righteousness, and that of God and from God and in God, yea, and Almighty God Himself. For the kingdom of God is nothing out of God, no outward possession like an earthly kingdom, but that blessed family; wherein He is All in all, the Life, the Bliss, the Glory, the Beauty, the Joy, the All-sufficing Fulness of all who are His. "Seek ye," He

saith, Him first Who hath all ye would have, "and all these things shall be added unto you," "over and above," so His words ¹ mean. If ye seek first what ye would have, ye will be but as the Heathen, and lose yourselves and them; seek *Him* first, and ye shall have Him, and all ye need "shall be added over and above unto you." Seek not first (as men even now do) earthly things, earthly pleasures, earthly comforts, luxuries, riches, and then, over and above, God, as though God were a mere appendage to His gifts, the Creator to His poor creatures; but seek ye first God, and then from Him and in Him ye shall have all things else.

This choice, repeated ten thousand times ten thousand-fold, is the one history of man. First or last! If God is not first, He is last. To choose any thing with God is to set up an idol *with* Him, and He hath said, "Thou shalt have none other Gods but Me," as He has said of the Day of Judgment, "I will cut off them that worship and swear to the Lord, and that swear by Malcham," *i.e.* those who in words give themselves to God, but join any created thing to worship with Him. To choose any thing wilfully which God wills not, is to dethrone God and set up an idol in His stead. What is any one's *god* but that from which he seeks his *good*? It seems to us strange when Darius forbade any prayer to be made for thirty days, save to himself.

¹ προστεθήσεται.

But what else do they who hang upon the favour of men, find their happiness in their praise, do wrong things to please them or for fear of them, or omit what is right in God's sight; what do they but make man their god, and, so far, fall under the curse of God? "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and in his heart departeth from the Lord." We think it strange that men should have fallen down before stocks and stones, have worshipped "images made like unto corruptible man, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things²." If a man covet, "covetousness," saith Holy Scripture, "is idolatry." Whatsoever a man desireth out of God, apart from God, that is his god. If a man steal, what he steals is that from which he looks for contentment, or good; it is his god. If a man heaps up luxuries to himself, and his soul takes rest therein, they are his good; that is, his god. If a man toil all his life long with one end in view, to make himself a name, to raise his family in the world, to manage others, and have his own way, to be looked up to in his neighbourhood, to be admired, be accounted clever, how were those senseless idolaters who set up Dagon in his place again, and bowed themselves anew before him, when he had fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark of the Lord, and yielded, as it were, an unwilling obeisance to God, how were these, when they anew worshipped

² Rom. i. 23.

their broken idol, more stupid idolaters than those who bow again and again before the idols which men set up in this world, when God has so often broken them in pieces, and shown, that from their worship there cometh only bitterness and grief and shame?

“Seek,” our Lord saith, “first,”—not leave to chance, not with a hesitating, divided will, not, again “forget not wholly” or “give to the things of God” a careless thought, now and then, once in the week, or at morning and evening, while your hearts are set upon the pleasures and riches and cares and vanities of this world; but “seek” as men who desire to find, and ye shall find God: find Him, having been found by Him; find Him so as never to lose Him; “and all these things shall be added unto you.”

And hath He not kept His Word? Who are the great and the noble and the princes of this world, whom we of this day count our benefactors? Are they those who sought the things of this world, or they who forewent them? Where are the giants which were before the flood, the mighty men of old, men of renown? What is known of them, save that they filled the earth with violence, ate and drank, and the flood swept them all away? And who in that generation remains, had in reverence in all the earth, but he who was “a just man, and perfect in his generations, and walked with God,” yet was doubtless the laughing-stock of the world which then was, while he builded the ark to the saving of his house? Where is he who, after the flood, be-

came a "mighty one on the earth," but a rebel against his God? The very stars are grouped by man after his form³, but himself is held as a curse. What became of those who said, "Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven, and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth?" What but that they brought upon them what they feared? "The Lord scattered them abroad from *thence*," from the very place of their might, "upon the face of all the earth?" And who of those times is loved and revered yet, not among Christians and Jews only, but among those alien to the faith, as "the friend of God⁴?" Who but that lonely wanderer, an outcast from his home, who left his country and his kindred and his father's house, and went out, not knowing whither he went, only that he followed the call of God? What remains of all the wisdom of the Egyptians, or the might of Pha-

³ The very name of "Nimrod" is derived from "rebellion." Holy Scripture says that Babel, built in rebellion, was "the beginning of his kingdom." See also Josephus, Arch. i. 4 and 6. p. 23. ed. Huds., and S. Jerome, Quæstt. Hebr. in Gen. ad loc. He is still known in the East under the title "the mocker." The constellation "Cesil," Am. 5, 8. Job ix. 9. xxxviii. 31. (translated Orion) is literally "the fool," and thence "the ungodly." In the East, it is known by the name "Aldjabbar," "the Giant," the name given to Nimrod in Genesis. The Paschal Chronicle, p. 36, says: "The Persians say that Nimrod, the founder of Babylon, was deified, and was placed among the stars as Orion.

⁴ Abraham's title among Mohammedans also. See e. g. D'Herbelot tit. Abraham and Khalil.

raoh? The sea covered them; they sank as a stone in the mighty waters. And he who esteemed "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt," became a "god to Pharaoh," to stand in the place of God towards him. Of what avail was the beauty and popularity of Absalom, or the huge might of Goliath, or the cruel policy of Joab, or the armies of Sennacherib, or the revelries of Belshazzar? They were their destruction. What of Jeroboam's crooked, ungodly policy, to make sure in his own way what God by His prophet Ahijah had promised him? "It became sin to the house of Jeroboam, even to cut it off, and to destroy it from off the face of the earth." Where the pomp and eloquence of Herod, when they said, "It is the voice of a god and not of a man?" "He was eaten of worms, and died." Where is Ahab, and the ivory house which he made? The dogs licked up his blood by the pool of Samaria. And where is he whom Ahab counted for his enemy, who fled for his life from Jezebel, who hid himself by a brook, and was fed by ravens, and was sought for in all kingdoms and nations, that he might be slain; who stood alone, a Prophet of the Lord, on Mount Carmel, against 450 prophets of Baal; against whom a king sent captains and their fifties, with raiment of hair-cloth and a leathern girdle about his loins? Where is he? We only know that he is, for half the time that the world has been, alive in the secret Presence of his God, that he came forth thence in glory at the Transfiguration of our Lord,

and spake with Him, and shall still, it is thought ⁵, come at the end of the world, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers. How does the Prophet Daniel tell of the might of empires, before whom none could stand, none deliver out of their hands, conquerors, who passed over the whole earth, and touched not the ground, swift as the wind! and where are they? or what trace is there of their power? The winds sweep over their palaces, and "their place knoweth them no more." Of their power, it says, as of all human might, "When he was strong, then he was broken ⁶." How, in the Apostles, do we hear of far other might, the might of obedience, the might of seeking "first the kingdom of God, and His Righteousness," the might of weakness, of poverty, of contempt, of endurance, of death, not inflicted but undergone. What speed of conquerors like theirs, whose sound went out into all lands, and their words unto the ends of the world? What might like theirs, before whom the gods of the heathen gave way, yea, those worse idols which men set up in their own hearts, their dark and foul and lewd sins, which melted like wax at the fire, which Christ gave them to kindle, and were burnt up like stubble by the spirit of burning which glowed in them? What rule like theirs, who, "having been with Jesus in His tribulations,"

⁵ See Note at the end.

⁶ Dan. viii. 8.

shall sit, He saith, on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel; yea, St. Paul saith, shall judge Angels, whom He hath made princes in all lands, ruling and ordering their lives by His Word which He spake through them. They sought "first the kingdom of God, and His Righteousness," and the Holy Church throughout the world, as, century after century, it obeys the faith of Christ, is the kingdom which they, through the might of our Lord, won to our Lord.

But these, you will say, through suffering! How, then, were "these things" added unto them, which, for His sake, they despised? If thou promisedst to a man some small coin for his labour, and instead thereof gave him, to the full contentment of his heart, broad lands and goodly houses, wouldest thou not have more than kept thy word? Even so, God withdraws no portion of the earthly reward, except to compensate it more abundantly with heavenly joys even on this earth. To those of tender strength He giveth milk; when full-grown, thou deemest it no hardship that thou hast strong meat instead. Even so, God addeth these things over and above to those who desire them, first desiring Him more; if any desire them not, He giveth them an hundred-fold in the fulness of His own joys. What could any have, in this world, more than St. Paul, to be "always rejoicing"? What, in the whole world, were like to

this, that, as the sufferings of Christ abounded in him, so his consolation also abounded through Christ? Sufferings, which Christ accounted as His own, sufferings which He suffered and bore in them and for them! This were in itself an intensity of joy. But then with them, over and above, there was an abundance of consolation, swelling like a tide, and mounting over and overwhelming the abundance of sufferings; and these consolations poured into the soul, and overflowing from the Hand of our Lord Christ Himself. As, then, the Manna, one in itself, suited every one's taste, so to all who "seek first the kingdom of God and His Righteousness," He giveth what He sees each to need. To those who in the sweat of their brow gain their bread, but seek Him first, He gives what they need for the body, and in soul, sweetness of contentment, and joy in Him, and calmness of hope, and unfailing trust, and inward consolations; and these mount ever, as what ye forego for Him, mounteth also; and to those who for His Name's sake and the Gospel's forsake houses, or brethren or sisters, or father or mother, or wife or children, or lands, "an hundred-fold, now in this same time, with persecutions^s," making the persecutions themselves, through His own Presence with them, a portion of their reward.

Truly "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, for their works do follow them," winning for them

^s S. Mark x. 30.

their Redeemer's Praise, by Whose grace they wrought them. And yet their fruits remain with us. Dynasties have passed away, human greatness decays; lands and manors change their owners; families cease to be: "all flesh is as grass, and all the goodness thereof as the flower of the field; the grass withereth, the flower fadeth," and what abideth? "The word of our God shall abide for ever." Nation after nation of old time swept over this land; the Ark of God rose again, and "went upon the face of the waters." In this ancient city there are few traces of the former greatness of this world; its oldest civil monument, once the human defence of this ancient city, remains but as a boundary wall, or as a shed for horses. Its glory is, that it still is in part, what it was called of old, the city of Churches. The Churches reared to the honour of God, the true defence of cities and of people, remain the emblems of their immortality in His presence, to Whom, and by Whose grace, they built them. They who reared them, "sought first the kingdom of God, and His Righteousness," and their reward is with their God.

And now what are ye asked for, but to maintain, year by year, the daily worship of your God? Those who were here this morning did not seem to know enough, what sum was needed; else they would have given more bountifully. Here day by day, He is sought Who is never sought in vain; they seek Him not for themselves only, but for you who can-

not come; here, joined invisibly with all besides, who through the whole Church, assemble to pray to God, they beseech Him, in the Name of our Redeemer, for the coming of His kingdom, the bruising of Satan, the gathering of the heathen, the well-being of our people, the conversion of those in sin, the strengthening of those assaulted, the perseverance of the faithful. Here they seek first “the kingdom of God and His Righteousness,” and gain, together with all who pray, the blessings of this life, and, through the Redeemer’s merits, gifts of grace and hope of glory.

My brethren, we have, both as individuals and as a nation, had many warnings to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.” It has been marvellous how for these many years, whenever we turned to God, He has turned to us. God forbid that we should boast that it is for any Righteousness of ours, (for we too have been a stiff-necked people,) yet we may hope, that since God awoke us from the dreary sleep of the last century, we have been, more than heretofore, seeking His kingdom and His Righteousness, and that these things have been added unto us, peace and rest⁹,—outward helps, we may trust, towards inward peace and rest, the fruits of outward rest even in Apostolic times, when “the Churches throughout all Judæa and Galilee and Samaria, hav-

⁹ This was said in reference to the civil rest which has been vouchsafed to us amid the troubles which have, for some years, been hanging over, or have fallen upon Continental states.

ing rest, were edified and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the Comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied.”

Surely, if ever there were times when every deed of faith had its instant reward, they are these. The windows of heaven are open, and God giveth the increase, so soon as devoted hearts are stirred to plant and water the seed of faith. These are times such as the Prophet speaks of¹, “I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn and wine and oil; and they shall hear Jezreel,” *i. e.* the place which God shall sow, “and I will sow her unto Me in the earth.” All things, all events, things adverse and things prosperous, have, in God’s Hands, worked together, and men have looked up to Him Who is the Giver of all. This is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes. At home, abroad, if there are every where too many traces of the past winter, yet every where God has been putting fresh life into the Church; every where there has been growth; what were desolate wildernesses, if not yet gardens of the Lord, still show tokens of His Hands, yea, of His Spirit, giving life where there was death, removing what was decayed, reviving what seemed lifeless, freshening what was dry, giving fruit to what seemed barren. And what blessing would we more have? doth it not contain all for us, that God

¹ Hos. ii. 21—23.

hath looked down from heaven, beheld, and visited this our Vine?

Only, the favour of our God must stir us to fresh deeds of love, trusting in Him. Every where in this land there are elements of destruction, which, if united, might at once overthrow throne, and government, and order, and property, and bring all the untold miseries of lawless passion. They are withheld not by man's foresight, not by might, but by the Word of our God, who hath set them bounds that they cannot pass, neither turn again to cover the earth. God bids us, then, by past mercies, by present grace, by fears of coming ill, by hopes in His Goodness, earnestly, with our whole hearts, seek Him and His Righteousness, and all these things, all ye need for soul and body, peace, comfort, joy, the overflowing of His consolations, shall be added over and above, unto you. "Over and above;" for His Chief Gift to those who seek Him, is Himself; here in Grace, hereafter in Glory; here to the soul, veiled in Sacraments, hereafter with unveiled Face, to gaze on His Beauty and be filled with His love; here in secret thrillings of joy, that He hath given thee grace to choose Him for thy Portion, there Himself to be thy Portion, thy Possession, thy Treasure, the Fulness of thy Joy, enfolding thee, and filling thee, and transporting thee with Joy which the holiest thought of Apostles never reached unto in this life, (for heart of man hath not conceived it,) the joy of thine own Lord.

Seek we Him then now that He may be found; seek we Him Who with Bleeding Hands has sought and found us; seek we Him in self-denying deeds of charity, in His House and honouring Him in it, in His Sacraments, in the daily duties of our calling, in all devoted service to which He calls any of us; and He Who was found of us when we sought Him not, how much more will He be with you when ye seek Him, here, in peace which passeth all understanding, and if His reward in this life, the hundredfold, pass all understanding, what must that be which is not an hundredfold only but Infinite, Boundless Beauty, Boundless Majesty, Boundless Wisdom, Boundless Glory, Boundless Love, yea God Himself Who is Love, wherein to rest, which to love for evermore. For if thou art God's, God is thine own,—thine own, more than if there were none besides; for He hath so said, "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine."

NOTE.

The ground of the belief that Elijah shall again come in person before the second Coming of our Lord, was our Lord's own words, in the same place in which He spake of John, as being in some sense Elias, as coming in His Spirit and His power. When our Lord says, "Elias has already come," He says also, "Elias shall first come, and *shall* restore all things." But when He so spake, John was beheaded. Hence Justin Martyr speaks positively: "Our Lord hath in His teaching delivered this very thing, saying that Elias shall come; and *we* [Christians as opposed to Jews] know that this shall be, when our Lord Jesus Christ is about to come in glory from heaven." Dial.

c. Tryph. § 49. Tertullian de Anima c. 35. de Res. Carn. c. 22. S. Jerome ad loc. S. Greg. Nyss. Testim. adv. Jud. t. ii. p. 120. Auct. de Prom. et Præd. Dei, c. 15. Theodoret and S. Cyril Alex. on Malachi. Andreas Cæsar. on the Rev. S. Greg. Mor. xiv. 23. xx. 34. Hom. 7. in Ev. § 1. speak positively. St. Augustine on St. John, Hom. iv. § 5. looks upon this, as an explanation how St. John said that he was not Elias, our Lord that he was. "Wherefore then doth he say, 'I am not Elias,' and the Lord, 'He is Elias?'" Because the Lord Jesus Christ was pleased in him to prefigure His future coming, and to speak with this meaning, that John was in the spirit of Elias: and what John was to the first Advent, that will Elias be to the Second Advent. As there are two Advents of the Judge, so there are two heralds: the Judge indeed, one and the same, but the heralds two, not two judges. For it behoved the Judge, in the first instance, to come to undergo judgment. He sent before Him His first herald: He called him Elias, because at the Second Advent Elias will be what John was at the first."

And in the de Civ. Div. xx. 29: "It is exceedingly well-known (*celeberrimum*) in the discourses and hearts of the faithful that through this Elias, the great and wondrous Prophet, the law being explained to them, the Jews will believe in the true Christ, *i. e.* our Christ. For with good reason is his coming hoped before the Coming of the Saviour as Judge, who now too is, with good reason, believed to be alive."

And S. Chrysostom on St. Matt. Hom. lvii. 1. says: "When He saith, 'Elias indeed cometh, and will restore all things,' He means Elias himself, and the conversion of the Jews which is then to take place; but when He saith, 'Which was for to come,' He calls John Elias, with regard to the manner of his ministration. For as the other shall be forerunner of the Second Advent, so was this of the First."

THE END.

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